

## GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA

ever memorable; for there was more than one unruly section in the Union! South Africa is deserving of all praise for its early and complete pardon of the ill-advised leaders as well as the unfortunate rank and file in the Rebellion.

On their part, the rebels, without being particularly abject, recognized the error of their ways. The soul of Dutch-speaking South Africa for years smarted under the after-effects of tremendous shocks, such as the dramatic deaths of De la Rey and Beyers and the equally painful capture and sentence of Christiaan de Wet. So long as the crowd is swayed by violent emotions, attempts to gauge the true perspective of events remains hopeless. In such days passion and imagination run riot. No wonder that Botha was anathematized "bloodhound" and "traitor" by those able to handle libellous aspersions in such a way as to gain them credence.

## XXXVII

### BOTHA AND THE SOUTH-WEST CAMPAIGN

WHO could have thought at Vereeniging, on May 31, 1902, that the Transvaal Commandant-General—with scarcely half a dozen “marauding bands” under him then!—was destined to be seen in less than thirteen years in command of a completely equipped force of fifty thousand—transports, motors, aeroplanes, and all! And further that this impromptu generalissimo, acting as a British ally, would within three months take a country as large as France from a European power, the Emperor of which had favoured a then friendly England with a plan of campaign against the Boers!

Botha’s plan of campaign, as well as the manner of its execution, has been praised by experts as a masterpiece. The territory for the greater part consists of an inhospitable stretch of veld; along the few usable roads there is little water, and columns of any size can hardly operate together. Botha, however, took great risks, because he did not believe in the slower methods of small detachments, involving—in the long run—heavier tributes in men and money. With remarkable success he reached his goal, thanks to excellent strategy—as an expert has called it—and forced marches by his mounted troops. Naturally, things would not have gone so well but for the admirable energy of his devoted officers and men.

*The Plan of Attack.*—The invasion had been planned as follows: The South-west was to be penetrated from four different places, columns converging on Windhoek as the rendezvous. Botha himself would be in command of the Northern forces, operating in that part of the country which

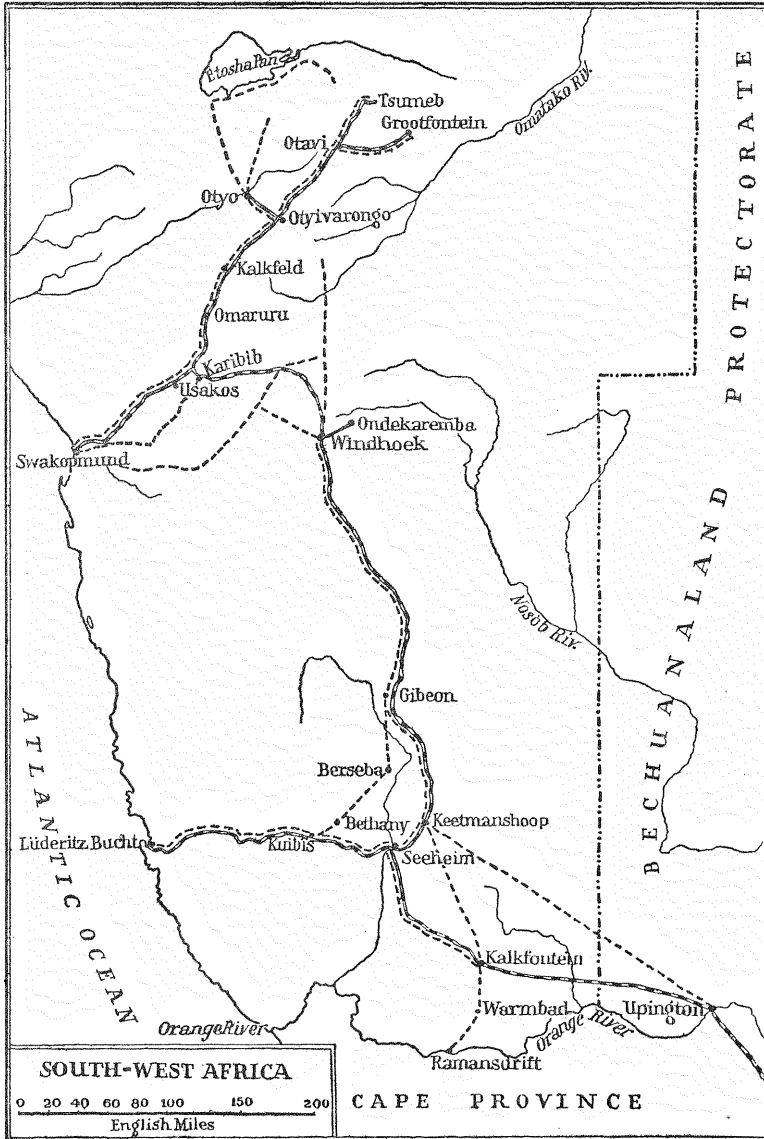
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was, economically and strategically, the most important. From Swakopmund his 21,000 men (13,000 of whom were mounted) would follow the railway eastward. The other three columns would approach respectively from the south-west, the south and the south-east. On February 11, 1915, the steamer landed him at the sandy mouth of the Swakop, a river that is almost perennially dry.

Preparations took over a month, and the delay in starting had such a bad effect on Botha's health that his staff became anxious, and Mrs Botha was sent for; but when he saw, from the window of his sick-room, that the Swakop was in spate, so that the troops would be enabled to march on, the patient recovered in the twinkling of an eye! On April 15 the Northern division started its eastward march. At first it traversed the endless belt of sand that shuts off the territory so effectually on the side of the ocean. On July 9 the German Governor capitulated, more than 400 miles further inland, near the other frontier of the Protectorate. Of Botha's fifty thousand men no more than 269 were killed by bullets, disease, or accidents, while 263 were wounded. It was an extremely economical and efficient piece of work.

Botha's object was to corner, as quickly as might be, the nucleus of the enemy force, a couple of thousand strong. From experience he knew how well a guerilla war might be eked out on small means; he knew, too, what guerilla tactics meant to the attacking force. Wherever he came into touch with the enemy, he always attempted enveloping movements. On May 5 he entered Karibib, 150 miles from the seaboard, whilst the Germans were evacuating it. On May 12 Windhoek, the capital, with its wireless (150 miles from the coast), formally surrendered. To its burgomaster Botha promised, in feeling language, that non-combatants would be respected in every way. His peremptory orders not to requisition goods from Germans without a receipt were carefully obeyed.

In the middle of May railway communication with Swakopmund was restored; General Coen Brits seized Omaruru. From there, by a big *détour* through an unknown



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district, he reached Tsumeb *via* the Etosha Pan; Union troops from the South likewise got to Tsumeb, the railway terminus and final rallying-centre of the Germans. Botha, after resting his forces at Karibib, trekked north-east, taking Kalkfeld on the 24th and Otjiwarongo two days later. On June 30 his nephew, Colonel Manie Botha, occupied Otavifontein, thus completely cutting off the German commander's line of retreat. Forced marches completed the investment of the enemy. Men and horses were done up, but Botha had forced a surrender—honourable capitulation; officers and men were allowed to retain their arms; the militia were permitted to return to hearth and home. During his conversations with the German Governor Botha reported to Smuts that he had demanded the surrender of the territory—not of the German forces. "I feel," he stated "that we should not unduly hurt their military pride; you will remember how keenly we ourselves felt such matters."

Botha never nurtured any ill will against the Germans. His Government was the only one during the War that respected the private property of enemy subjects. Although, during the progress of the military operations, naturalized Germans sometimes made things awkward for him, and—to his knowledge—agitated against him, he always did what he could to protect them when the passions of the British section were roused, as sometimes they were.

When he undertook to lead the campaign, he soon found that, in the Union, data regarding South-west Africa were exceedingly scanty, even in military circles. Aggressive operations in German territory had never been contemplated. Hurriedly, maps and other intelligence were collected. During Botha's stay at Swakopmund he was able to examine an Afrikaner transport-rider as well as a Cape Boy, both of whom had travelled the country in all directions; and thus he gathered expert knowledge as to water, mountain ranges, and bush. These verbal details were at once verified, and collated with cartographic information. In that way Botha's topographical knowledge of the Protec-



AFTER THE SOUTH-WEST CAMPAIGN

The Union Buildings at Pretoria include an amphitheatre which is particularly suitable for public ceremonies. General Botha upon his return from South-west Africa was given a festive reception there toward the middle of 1915.

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torate formed so complete a mental panorama that during the concentration on Tsumeb he was able to send detailed marching-orders to General Myburgh and Colonel Alberts without consulting a map, just as if he had personally visited and explored the ground in question. During the forward movement he used to gather his staff officers round him at some elevation, asking their opinions on potential subsequent moves. Having listened, he not infrequently differed from this counsel; he would make up his mind as to where to push the attack, and what the disposal of the advanced battalions ought to be. Invariably his solution proved to be the correct one, and his hypotheses to tally with facts.

*At Swakopmund.*—While struggling with preparatory measures at Swakopmund he was visited (in March) by Lord Buxton, Governor-General. His Excellency was attended by an Imperial officer of high rank. Both of them advised the immediate strengthening of the division that was to invade the country from Luderitzbucht, along the southern line of railway. The commander of those troops, too, had asked for reinforcements, being convinced that the Germans would do their best to bar his progress. Botha insisted that this idea was groundless, with the argument that the Germans had abandoned all positions in that neighbourhood. The other, however, continued to press his request for more men. Botha then took ship to Luderitzbucht, and went to the place where opposition had been anticipated. He also had three thousand men sent by way of reinforcements; but when the attack at last came off, the enemy proved to have been gone for some considerable time. Botha's intuition once more corresponded with the facts of the situation.

The enforced delay at Swakopmund made Botha and his staff impatient. Waiting during relative inactivity spoilt everyone's temper. One evening, Dr Bok tells me, he and Botha had a game of chess. Bok impounded the queen. Botha, who was not a good loser at either cards or chess, made some petulant remark, at which Dr Bok refused to

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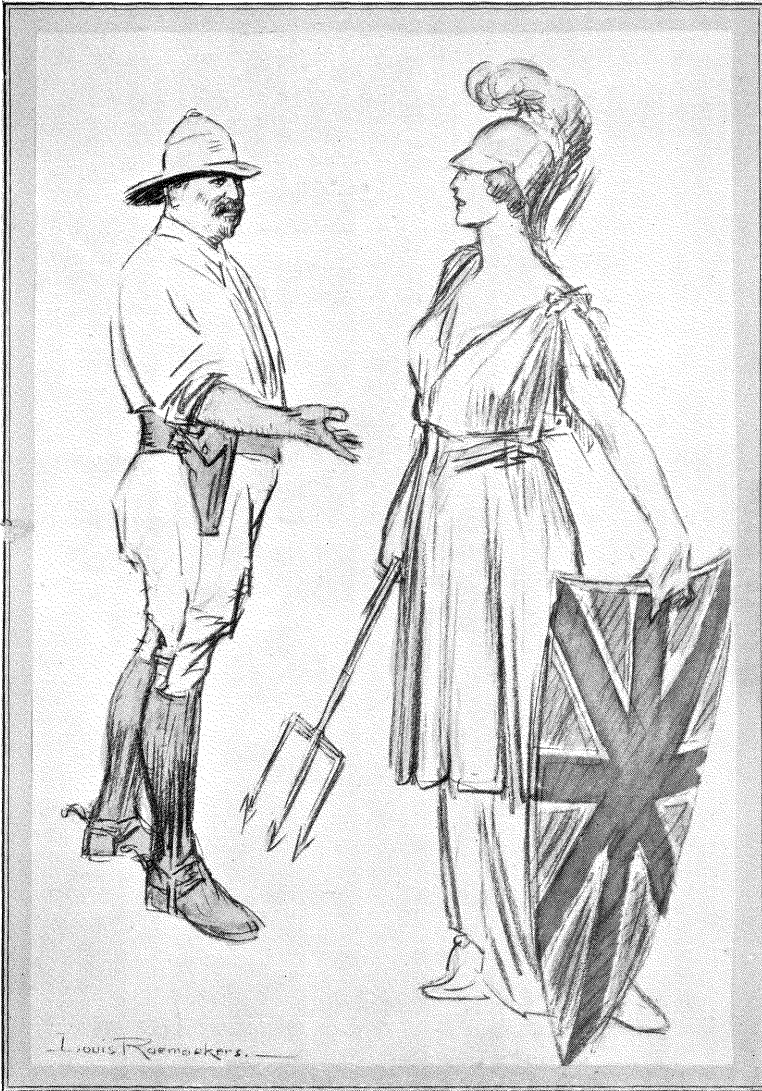
go on. The presence of an officer added to the awkwardness of the incident. For a few days there was a distinct coldness in the atmosphere, Botha confining himself to purely official matters in talking to his secretary. The latter felt compelled to put an end to the tension; as usual without knocking, he entered the General's bedroom and found him kneeling at the table in attitude of prayer. A little later, Bok went again in order to offer apologies. With tears in his eyes, Botha said that Bok's ebullition of temper had grieved him, looking as he did on the other as on a younger brother.

There was something else on his mind during the campaign. While he had to give all his attention to military matters, and was entirely sacrificing personal comfort to the prosecution of the war—being then in his fifty-third year—he heard of the anti-German riots at Johannesburg and elsewhere in the Union. Highly indignant, he had a message published, pointing out that those who were bearing the brunt of the war might reasonably expect that stay-at-homes should behave, and not indulge in lawlessness.

*With Forced Marches.*—The leader's wish to shorten the campaign greatly taxed the staying-powers of his mounted men who, once started, were never given the chance of a proper rest. They relentlessly pursued the enemy with forced marches. On the occupation of Otavi, when the surrender of the German troops was a question of a few days at most, Botha ordered a resumption of the march that night at ten. The A.D.C. returned, reporting that men and horses were so spent that they would most likely prove both unable and unwilling to go on. Botha replied: "Tell them I am proceeding to-night." When at ten p.m. the whistle shrilled for departure, the whole of the commando had fallen in to follow its leader.

A little while previously Botha, accompanying the forward march in a motor, had halted at a farmhouse; with an officer he entered the house. Dense clouds of dust in various directions showed that mounted men were moving at great speed. Botha had just finished a cup of coffee, when a





BOTHA TO BRITAIN : "Carried out your wish and in accordance  
with our compact at Vereeniging."

A cartoon by Louis Raemaekers, the original of which was presented by the artist to  
General Botha.

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knock was heard at the front door. The officer opened. Three German stragglers asked for a drink of water. The officer told them to enter, minus their guns. Immediately Botha began to cross-examine them, what time his A.D.C. had the German rifles removed by the chauffeur. The trio never imagined they were facing the invaders' commander-in-chief; as for Botha, he just missed the chance of being taken prisoner!

Just as had happened in the Boer war, many of the Union men asked for short home leave, even during the early stages of the campaign. Botha had a happy way of silencing these importunities by promising that leave would be given on his birthday. The men desisted, and by the end of September most of them were back in the Union.

Once the terms of capitulation had been settled Botha left for Pretoria, where there was urgent work for the Premier to despatch. On July 30, after a five months' absence, he landed at Capetown, where a great reception was given him. Not long since, the two extremist sections in the Union had looked as if they were determined to seize each other by the throat, and as if the goodwill between Briton and Boer, desired by every right-thinking person, would for ever remain a dream. There had been the possibility, too, of the South-west episode ending in a way harmful to the Union. Botha had succeeded within very little time in warding off the danger of civil war and had made the Union the most powerful country in Southern Africa, without undue expenditure in either men or funds.

The people were grateful to their Warrior-Premier for all this. Only the Nationalists stood aside. Under the caption "*Botha Triumphant*" their principal organ brought out the fact that his success had cost brother-blood. Was this a just reproach, in face of its coming from the party that subsequently repudiated the Rebellion?

## XXXVIII

### BOTHA SAVES THE UNION

THE outbreak of the Great War made most of the nations affected feel the need of a truce in party politics. The example of France, where a *Union Sacrée* between all nationals was proclaimed, was emulated by other countries. South Africa adopted the opposite course. A demon of unrest ravaged the country. The armed insurrection was followed by a period of intense restlessness and excitement, during which symptoms of renewed rebellion were more than once diagnosed.

Conditions overseas promoted material progress in the Union. Factories were built; quotations for wool, coal, and maize ruled high. Owing to the departure of tens of thousands of volunteers for service overseas those who remained behind knew no unemployment. The food position caused practically no difficulty, even though the cost of living rose. Our country scarcely knew how well off it was. The disasters chastising Europe had no more than a faint echo among us. Perhaps all this goes to explain the ardent, even passionate, manner in which the population—knowing itself safe—indulged in its incessant political and economic wrangles. The war atmosphere made people self-willed as well as irritable, so that Government was hard put to it in carrying out its appointed task.

Fortunately, everyone who felt so inclined was allowed to blow off steam to his heart's content, provided no violence was used. Once or twice the Government had to appeal to the public for obedience to the law. The tension in public life invaded the family circle and the church. Parliament regularly held its, occasionally stormy, Sessions. There was a succession of party congresses, which blithely

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kept dissension alive. The censor left us with a free Press and platform; everybody aired his views, whenever he pleased. The convicted rebels were released and their political disabilities removed.

*Election Bitterness.*—Shortly after his return from the South-west, in the middle of 1915, Botha opened his election campaign. The second General Election after unification was destined to be held in the midst of din and friction, in the month of October. The Nationalists had their first opportunity of showing what their party could do. Botha reminded the people of what his Government had accomplished and what warded off; he pointed out the unfortunate strength of provincialism. Of those who realized the efforts it had cost to make the dead letter of the Constitution a live instrument for South African development the number was small. Among the Dutch there was a deal of extreme bitterness against Botha. His opponents simply could not fathom his attitude. Many of his old friends were now inveterate opponents. "Judas," he was called, "traitor, bloodhound, murderer!"

During these days of mental stress an incident occurred, typical of the morbid mentality of many political coteries. In 1915 pamphlets were printed in Holland, purporting to demonstrate that Botha had been a traitor in the Boer war, deceiving his people in a series of insidious acts, meant to benefit the enemy. Probably this libel, ably engineered—every country knows instances of manœuvres of this kind—was connected with the merciless propaganda maintained by Germany with no less vigour than that of her opponents. The Allies would be dealt a nasty blow if Botha's Government could be defeated in the elections. The pamphlet in question was soon refuted by a South African lawyer, Dr H. D. J. Bodenstein, then staying in Holland. He convincingly exposed the aspersions. It was not dared openly to circulate them in South Africa, but a number of pamphlets were got into the hands of Botha's opponents, who typed the contents, and were thus able to spread a good many copies of the scurrilous lampoon. With avidity the

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credulous, who were vindictive as well, swallowed even the most improbable abominations, as though they were pleasant stimulants.

*Wild Hustings.*—The election of October 1915 was distinguished by an orgy of ruthlessness and personalities, completely dividing the Dutch-speaking section into two camps. Many who ought to have known better neglected the great importance, politically, of respect for the amenities of the platform. Although Botha's speeches were marked by much greater moderation than those of the bulk of his opponents, he cannot be absolved from the charge of having sometimes made injudicious remarks. A candidate's name might have an unfamiliar ring to his ears, or perhaps some other candidate, instead of having been with the commandos during the Boer war, had been under orders to accompany President Kruger to Europe; in such cases he vented his irony on the persons concerned. His soberly conceived platform was not of the kind by which the average voter is inspired. In those days it was looked upon as a much more heroic performance to incite the constituencies against Britain—or to make them glow with enthusiasm for the same country, as the case might be—than to expound the duties of a citizen of British South Africa.

In spite of all these things, Botha's party managed to win 59 Assembly seats, 95,000 votes having been cast for its candidates. The fact that Botha was able to maintain such strength in the face of the conditions of 1915—between the upper and the nether millstones of Unionism and Nationalism—is very much to his credit. It is also a feather in the cap of the moderate section, which was responsible for the great number of votes mentioned. The balance of 71 M.L.A.'s was composed of 40 Unionists, 4 Labour men, and 27 Nationalists. Until then, the latter had had only eight members in the House. General Hertzog's adherents at the polls aggregated 77,000. About 55,000 electors had supported Unionism.

*Botha wants to Resign.*—The South Africa Party did not manage to get an absolute majority, and three of the



BOTHA AT HIS DESK IN UNION BUILDINGS

Although anything but a bureaucrat, Botha acquitted himself conscientiously of his ministerial duties.

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Ministers failed to obtain re-election. Botha wanted to resign. He felt the humiliation of depending, with his dismembered Cabinet, on the support of the Unionist Party, which had criticized his policy to the last. It had, in fact, fought him every bit as hard as had the Nationalists, both because his manner of carrying on the War was considered not energetic enough and owing to his continued refusal to introduce compulsory overseas service. He remained in power, however. The argument that military considerations necessitated his continuance in office, and would guarantee his parliamentary majority (no other party being in a position to form a Government with any prospect of permanence), decided him.

In the new House the Nationalists asserted themselves as a determined Opposition. Vainly, however, they cast the net; a vote of no-confidence—in the shape of a motion, on the Estimates, to reduce the Prime Minister's salary—was negatived. Right through the War, *i.e.* during the open clash of sentiment in the Union, Parliament as a rule made but a poor show as a legislature. It is but fair to admit that in those years politicians in no single country cared much for solid legislative work. As for Botha, his impatience of criticism increased with the years, so that the heavy atmosphere of the House became even more oppressive. Lord Buxton remarks:<sup>1</sup>

Botha never had the advantage of sitting in opposition, a useful experience, which enlarges the mind, expands the view, and inculcates patience. Government accumulates unpopularity, while the Opposition can do no wrong. Botha never sojourned in the wilderness, nor underwent this healthy chastening and purging.

*An Unpleasant Year.*—The year 1916 was an unpleasant one to Botha. At the end of 1915 his good friend and private secretary, Dr W. E. Bok, became Secretary for Justice. Shortly afterward, General Smuts left for East Africa, to take over the command. Botha, remaining Commandant-General, temporarily took the Defence portfolio as well. This doubled his official duties once again.

<sup>1</sup> *General Botha* (Murray).

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At the end of January a gnu on his Standerton farm killed two of his natives in a paddock containing blesbuck and gnu. This made a trip to Rusthof necessary, after which he had to go and attend the Session at Capetown. He had invited Sir Meiring Beck and Colonel Mentz to join the Cabinet, which needed fresh blood.

The Session started quietly. Members occupied themselves with consolidating legislation. His own party was disciplined as never before. To a friend he wrote: "I am amazed to see how well we are getting on, but expect trouble in Committee of Supply. My work has been greatly increased by Smuts' departure." In detail the letter described the failure of a Unionist attempt to push through extra pay for overseas troops. There were advocates of such a measure within his own ranks; the caucus debated the matter for three days:

"I saw that I was being forced, and that the division [in the Assembly] would be on racial lines. This was flying in the face of my policy so strongly that I got up [in caucus] to say that although I myself was in favour, I intended standing by the Dutch members in a division, as I could not afford to be an English leader; my place, I added, was with my 'ain folk,' but that I should resign at once. To be brief, within three minutes there was such unanimity as you have never seen. I afterwards talked matters over with Smartt; told him that I could not get the pay through, that I could not allow myself to be coerced, and that I should make such-and-such a speech. In the House he shed a few tears; our lot lay low; the Nationalists listened, mouths open and ears hanging down. From that time the barometer is set fair."

Botha had discussed the question with his Governor-General too. Lord Buxton noted down Botha's words as follows: "Their (*i.e.* the Unionists') speeches will raise trouble between English and Dutch, and they are driving my people away from me. . . . I am neither pro-Dutch nor pro-English on racial lines. I have stood out against such a policy for ten years. . . . Such a position I could not, and



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would not, tolerate," meaning that he would not divide the nation racially on the pay issue. Botha stuck to his work on behalf of conciliation, but at critical moments he never lost sight of the fact that "his place was with his ain folk"—"my people," as he said to Lord Buxton.

*South Africa German?*—Under his brother-in-law, General Cheere Emmett, Botha sent a labour-squad of ten thousand natives to French ports, in order to work behind the fighting line. In June he warned Durban against any recrudescence of anti-German demonstrations. At the end of the month he appeared as a witness before the Rebellion Enquiry Commission. In the middle of July he left for East Africa, where he met General Smuts. The end of August saw him at a Free State South Africa Party Congress. At Klerksdorp, in September, he stated that it would be better to fight another two years than to have to start afresh in ten years' time. Thereupon he visited the natives in Pondoland and elsewhere in the Transkei.

Then a series of meetings—first in his constituency, Losberg, and subsequently in Colesberg, Wakkerstoom, Heidelberg, Middelburg, Lydenburg. At Lake Chrissie he explained that when he used the words "carrying the war to a successful issue" he meant that he wanted to avoid South Africa becoming German. On the last day of October he spoke at Ermelo; this was an interesting occasion, because he was reported to have boasted of the extent of South Africa's independence, using as an illustration that "we could deport even an Englishman." On the same day he entered a libel action against Senator Wolmarans.

In November he visited Volksrust and Maritzburg. In December he attended the Dingaan's Day celebrations at Paardekraal (Krugersdorp), despite political complications. It was especially the Transvaalers who had continued to commemorate, every five years, the final break-up of the Zulu power by the Boers in 1838. Botha had previously expressed the wish that the next Dingaan's Day would see a revival of the ancient glory and traditional celebration. In May 1916 he appealed to the people "to confess our sins

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in concord, and pray together at the foot of the historic monument for the blessing of God on the process of unifying and saving our nation." The celebration was a success as regards attendance and organization; his political opponents, however, stayed away, feigning indignation at Botha's "roping in Paardekraal for his own purposes." Toward the end of 1916, with all its tribulations, Mrs Botha suffered from a serious illness, which caused her husband lasting anxiety. Thus Botha was depressed by mental worries and physical fatigue.

*The Year 1917.*—A journey in the Northern Karroo started in 1917. There was a by-election at Victoria West, and Botha's appearance helped his party to gain the day. General Smuts left for England, to serve as a member of the Imperial War Cabinet; the Prime Minister had to enlighten a suspicious public on the meaning of that move. In the Assembly there were complaints because the new Union uniform was khaki-coloured; Botha reminded hon. members that it was the late General Beyers who had chosen that shade. Nationalist orators began to talk openly of a republic. When Botha reproached General Hertzog with being a republican in name only, the Nationalist leader announced, at a Pretoria mass meeting: "I am a republican, not merely in theory, but in practice as well." His party was working for secession from the Empire.

During the Session Botha addressed meetings at Stellenbosch, Malmesbury, and Robertson, but in the middle of July he had to hand over to Mr F. S. Malan the duties of the Premiership in order to take rest. During the second half of September his libel action against Senator Wolmarans was fought out at Pretoria. The defendant had, at a meeting in the Pretoria district in October 1916, charged Botha with fraudulently altering a map of the South-west border, with boasting of the killing of rebels, and, finally, with having acted as the hanger-on ("*kalfakter*") in the old Transvaal Volksraad of a deputy whose national sentiments were rather suspect. Mr Wolmarans instituted a claim in reconvention, on the ground that Botha, in

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September 1916, had reflected at a Losberg meeting on the defendant's physical courage. The hearing lasted a couple of days, ending with the withdrawal by both parties of all libellous matter; the defendant consented to judgment for costs in plaintiff's favour. This incident characterizes the acerbity of feeling that was disfiguring public life, making it all but intolerable. At the end of 1917 Botha addressed meetings at Ventersdorp, Potchefstroom, and Johannesburg.

*Heightened Tension.*—Things were going badly in Europe, which heightened tension in South Africa. At a recruiting conference held in Johannesburg Botha emphatically reiterated his refusal to commandeer. A few days previously "God save the King" had been sung in the Assembly, led by a Durban member, which induced a fellow-legislator to inquire whether he had permission to intone the old Free State anthem. Shortly afterward a Unionist member called his Nationalist colleagues "spies."

The seizure of mercantile shipping from Holland by the British Government caused ill-feeling in South Africa; Botha, in a confidential letter to General Smuts, said, *i.a.*:

"The question of the ships from Holland is getting to be highly inconvenient for us here. The Nationalists seem to be much better posted than I am. Their information, of course, comes from the consulates. What I do not like is the prospect of Anglo-Dutch friction, and I want to ask you to do your utmost in order to maintain friendly relations. The greater England's friendship with Holland, the easier it becomes to uphold the Empire in South Africa. There is a tender feeling in the Union for Holland, and I should very much like you to send me an urgent cable in case of trouble, for I should greatly appreciate having an opportunity of offering some advice in a matter of that sort."

South Africa's Prime Minister felt deeply conscious of his claim to be heard in London and convinced that his scope included international affairs by which the Empire might be affected. He advocated the maintenance of good relations between England and Holland, because that would serve not only Imperial interests but accord with South

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African sentiment as well. As far back as 1918 the Union pulled its weight in issues that were being settled in the Old World, no less than six thousand miles away.

How hectic political conditions were during this period is evident from the assault at Capetown on General Hertzog; from repeated assurances made by politicians to the public that Botha's hands and arms, up to the elbows, were dripping with blood; from reproaches as to half-heartedness levelled at the Dutch section—answered by Botha in the Assembly with the reminder that no one could expect Afrikanders to be quite so bellicose as the British. On July 5 the Government felt constrained to appeal to the people to maintain law and order. In the middle of October an appeal was made for a large consignment of mealies, as a present to Holland. Shortly afterward we had our share of the influenza epidemic, coinciding with the collapse of the Central Powers.

The War was over. Toward the end of the year Botha left for England in order to take part in the Peace negotiations.

## XXXIX

### BOTHA AT PARIS AND VERSAILLES

ALFRED ZIMMERN'S interesting book, *The Third Empire*, published in 1926, contains the following passage:

I well remember a certain day in December 1918 when, as I was working in my room in the British Foreign Office, somebody entered in a condition of much excitement, and told us that Canada wished to be represented at the Peace Conference and was even taking an interest in the League of Nations. It was very inconvenient. What was the Foreign Office to do?

There is no reason to doubt the occurrence. Such a statement, however, conveys a totally erroneous impression. The British Government could not very well be either surprised or displeased, at the end of the Great War, at the Dominions' desire for complete international status. London had been the scene of numerous conversations between members of the British Government and Dominion Cabinet Ministers visiting the metropolis on the new aspect of Imperial relations in the event of victory.

In 1917-18 the big hotels in the Strand frequently had such guests as Sir Robert Borden, Mr Meighen, and other prominent Canadians, Mr Hughes and Sir Joseph Cook (Australia), Mr Massey and Sir Joseph Ward (New Zealand), Mr Lloyd (Newfoundland), Mr Henry Burton, and General Smuts. Mr Massey, it appeared on notes being compared, was very 'English.' Mr Lloyd George and Mr Churchill were not enthusiastic over the prospect of seeing the Dominions figure as separate Powers at the Peace Conference table. Lord Milner, on the other hand, had abandoned his old 'proconsular' ideas about Empire structure in favour of those held by Sir Robert Borden,

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General Botha, and General Smuts. These men were opposed to federalism and an Imperial Parliament. They wanted frank recognition of an autonomous international status, which the military prowess of the Dominions during the War had justified.

“No one outside a lunatic asylum wants to force these young nations into any particular mould,” General Smuts had said in London as far back as April 1917. It was plain that a new Imperial life was stirring in embryo, long before the Allies dictated peace terms to the Central Powers. At the time of the Armistice the ground had been well prepared—except, perhaps, as far as the Foreign Office was concerned—for public proclamation of the new Dominion status in international law. Together, the ‘Colonies’ had mobilized a million men and hundreds of millions of pounds. There could be no idea of any bombshell effect in Downing Street about their rank at the Conference.

As a result of strenuous efforts throughout the Empire the need for closer consultation on matters of strategy was felt. This led to the Imperial War Cabinet—not to be confused with the War Cabinet of Great Britain—which was inaugurated in April 1917. It had a “wider purpose, jurisdiction and personnel,” as Sir Robert Borden remarked.

We meet as equals, each responsible to the respective Parliaments. Each nation preserves unimpaired its perfect autonomy, its self-government and the responsibility of its Ministers to their own electorate. With the institution of the Imperial War Cabinet a new page of history had been written. It announced the birth of a new and greater Imperial Commonwealth.

Botha was quite *au fait* when, having been summoned to Europe, he landed in December 1918. On January 11 following he and General Smuts arrived in Paris as members of the British Delegation, two months after the Armistice.

I well remember a conversation during which General Botha indicated correctly what the new position amounted to. He was fully conscious of the status occupied by South Africa among the “Allied and Associated Powers” and

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within the frame of the League of Nations, for which General Smuts—to the entire satisfaction of President Wilson—had recently drafted the Covenant.

On January 18 the first formal meeting of some seventy representatives of the victors took place. Fourteen came from the United Kingdom and its “oversea possessions.” This was a term, still current in chancelleries, but quite antiquated as far as the facts were concerned. America, France, and Japan only had five members each. This was the first tangible demonstration of the fact that the Empire, as constituted when war was declared, had ceased to exist. When peace was signed at Versailles on June 28 the world beheld a new ‘Empire,’ of a kind hitherto unknown. The last vestige of Dominion subjection to the United Kingdom had vanished.

*Botha's Influence.*—Originally all the members of the British Delegation were kept abreast of the course of negotiations, the scope of which before long became so overwhelming that the full delegation was only convened by Mr Lloyd George on special occasions. Beyond these, every member found his own way.

At an early date the Union obtained rights over South-west Africa amounting to virtual annexation, subject to restrictions of a military nature and to protection of the aborigines against alcohol and conscription. As to these restrictions South Africa was to be responsible, as a mandatory, to the League.

At one time it was thought that the German colonies would be simply annexed by the powers concerned. Sir Robert Borden, it is said, was in favour of their being handed to the United States. The Supreme Council, however, had already adopted a line of policy; and the mandatory system was introduced in international law. On May 7, 1919, South-west Africa was allotted to the Union of South Africa. Germany ceded its territory to the Supreme Council, which put certain States in charge, partly with unconditional authority, partly under conditions that included control of the League of Nations, but with

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sovereign power to the mandatories for "C" territories—*in casu*, South-west Africa.

Mr George Barnes, in his *Reminiscences*,<sup>1</sup> tells us:

One meeting at the rooms of Mr Balfour lingers in my mind, because of the intervention of General Botha. General Botha was a great man. Never made any long speeches, but his presence in any gathering could be felt. What little he had to say was always to the point; and always on the side of a long and generous view of things. Botha sat next to Lord Milner, and put in a plea for clemency.

Perhaps the allusion is to Botha's attitude toward the scheme, fathered by Mr. Lloyd George, of citing the Kaiser, together with others who were regarded as war criminals, before an International Court. During the 1918 general election in Britain Mr Lloyd George had been most successful at the booths with the cry of "Hang the Kaiser!"

This induced him to press his claim in Paris. Mr Hughes, the Australian Premier, supported him, but Botha opposed the unwise scheme. He pointed to events in South Africa, where the return to a peaceful frame of mind after the Boer war had been greatly assisted by the cancellation of wholesale prosecution of Cape and Natal rebels. As long as war criminals were 'smelt out,' he argued, Europe would know no peace. He advised speedy prosecution in a very small number of really flagrant cases.

*The Beggar turned Prince.*—The Botha spirit won the day. The Treaty provided for proceedings against the Kaiser; extradition by the Netherlands Government was demanded, but not insisted upon when the answer proved to be a refusal. Mr Lloyd George, however, was able to face his supporters with a clear conscience. It was not due to him that the Kaiser remained unhung!

Twenty years before, William II had turned away Paul Kruger. He had failed to invite the three Boer generals, when on a begging mission to Berlin, to his palace. What he had done was to offer Queen Victoria a plan of campaign against the Boer Republics. What would he have said had

<sup>1</sup> *Workshop to War Cabinet* (Jenkins).





BRITISH DELEGATION,  
PARIS.

*Mrs. Botha*

*W. Smuts*

BOTHA'S SIGNATURE

Until the end this bore indications of strength of will, as appears in this example from Botha's Paris Peace Conference papers.

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anyone then predicted that one of the three beggars would cast away vindictiveness far enough to save his Majesty from a halter woven for his august neck by a British Cabinet?

Some French generals wanted a triumphal entry into Berlin. Botha, with equal success, advised against such a waste of military energy. At one of the meetings of the British delegates to the Conference, where terms were discussed, Botha strongly opposed any pin-prick policy. "My soul has felt the harrow," he exclaimed; "I know what it means." Mr Robert Lansing, the American Secretary of State, who knew Botha in those days, wrote a few years later :

Botha was essentially logical and unemotional in whatever he said or did. The enthusiasm of the visionary made no headway with him. Reason and facts were what appealed to him. He looked forward to the final judgment of men, and not to the temporary popularity which a policy might gain under the stress of exciting conditions, or the passing emotions of an aroused public opinion. He possessed that foresight which sees the end at the beginning and prevents the adoption of a course which may be disastrous, or unwise, or of doubtful expediency.

No wonder that Botha felt anything but comfortable in the atmosphere of the Conference, with its short-sighted egoism, its reckless intoxication of victory and injudicious scramble for immediate gain.

In complete disregard of the Western armistice, fighting went on cheerfully in Eastern Europe. Poland and the Ukraine—afterward part of the Federated Soviet Republics—were hammering away at each other to their hearts' content. The Ukraine had befriended the Ruthenians, who were hereditary enemies to the Poles. This humiliating state of affairs was noticed by President Wilson. Before the end of January Botha was approached with a view to becoming chairman of a Peace Commission, to be designated by the Great Powers; but he became seriously ill from influenza. The "Big Four" then sent a few emissaries to Eastern Galicia, the venue of continued strife. These

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succeeded in patching up a peace which, unfortunately, lasted but a few days!

The Supreme Council then intervened. America, the British Empire, France, and Italy contributed two delegates each to a Commission that was to engineer an armistice. Botha, asked by Mr Lloyd George to serve, accepted the invidious distinction. He felt that his own country's interests demanded of him that he should be instrumental in assuring the success of Allied diplomacy. No genuine co-operation between the four elements of the Commission could, however, be anticipated, and this rendered Botha's task an unpleasant one. He had systematically declined private visits from representatives of the countries concerned or from agents of the threatened interests, and he listened to their arguments only when formulated at the Commission's meetings.

At the first sitting in the Foreign Office at the Quai d'Orsay, late in April 1919, Botha was elected chairman. Eight more meetings took place, at which Poland, the Ukraine, and Lithuania pressed their claims. One of the most interesting figures was the famous Paderewski, then the Polish premier.

Each of the deputations covered the Conference table with huge maps in support of their mutually incompatible territorial demands. At last a draft armistice was concocted and laid before the Poles and Ukrainians on May 12. A typical provision was that while the armistice lasted neither party should confer oil concessions!

The Ukraine accepted. Poland refused on 'military' grounds. The Commission reported to the Supreme Council, which gave the refractory Polish dictator Pilsudski a warning. His troops, however, continued the occupation of Galicia, with an eye to the oilfields. On June 25—only a few days before Versailles—the Council approved a compromise in favour of Poland. Prior to these events it had been decided to send a few people in authority to Warsaw to make an attempt at getting the contestants to come together.

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*Sir W. Beauchamp and Sir William Orpen.*—Botha was one of them. Although by no means in robust health, he was prepared to undertake the railway journey—anything but a picnic in those halcyon days. He was determined to do his duty to the bitter end, without regard to comfort or even personal safety. At the eleventh hour the journey was baulked by Mr Brebner, his private secretary, and myself, a temporary member of Botha's staff during his stay in Paris. Just a few weeks previously I had accompanied General Smuts to Budapest on a mission to Bela Kun, the Bolshevik dictator of Hungary, and thus gained an opportunity of realizing how much the old dictum that Europe ceases east of Vienna and Berlin remained true—at any rate during the period immediately after the War. We got Sir W. Beauchamp, the doctor attached to the British Delegation, to veto Botha's onerous undertaking in view of the serious attack of influenza from which he had recently suffered. Mrs Botha, who happened to be on the spot, supported us.

It was not without some trouble that we managed to dissuade the General. His weakening constitution even then began to cause anxiety. A portrait had been done of him by Sir William Orpen, who had fixed up a temporary studio in an hotel near the Arc de Triomphe. Sir William had, with admirable artistic success, painted among those who came to assist the Conference many a famous statesman, diplomat, and warrior. Mrs Botha, one fine morning, took me to the studio, as she was thus far dissatisfied with the result of the artist's efforts. She wanted me to tell Sir William that I, too, disapproved. The canvas shocked me! Inspired by acute vision, native to the true painter, Orpen had with unconsciously cruel brush emphasized the fatigue and worry whose signs were showing in Botha's normally virile features. Orpen did not finish the portrait. A second effort gave more satisfaction.

A month after the Conference opened Belgium induced the Supreme Council to appoint a Commission—presided over by M. Tardieu, the French statesman—in order to

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examine the changes in the Belgian position among the nations. The famous "guarantee" of Belgium's neutrality had been consigned to limbo. It was especially desired to clarify Belgium's relations with Holland. In those days Paris was not well disposed toward Scandinavia, Spain, Switzerland, and Holland. Some even advocated a considerable levy on these neutrals for the benefit of the victors! Brussels demanded from Holland part of the latter's territory, including the mouth of the Scheldt, on which river Antwerp is situated. Belgium had no objection to Holland being indemnified by the incorporation of German districts!

France enthusiastically seconded. The neutrals were, of course, not represented at the Conference. They were pretty well defenceless against the decisions of the Supreme Council, which had taken upon itself the task of readjusting the affairs of dismembered Europe. The Tardieu Commission approved the Belgian demands in principle, and advocated the scheme before the Supreme Council. There, it was strongly opposed by President Wilson. Mr Lloyd George was quite prepared to deal with the question of navigation on the Scheldt, but refused to countenance any territorial transactions.

It was a time of flux; dozens of weird boundaries were being created, and Belgium's aggressive temper might have triumphed—which would have caused serious trouble—but for the vigilance of the South African delegates. They contested any unwarrantable inroads on the integrity of Holland, and the Dutch Foreign Secretary, Jhr. van Karnebeek, obtained an opportunity of consulting Generals Botha and Smuts, and of addressing the Supreme Council. It was pleasant to have been able to reduce the number of Paris blunders in 1919 by one at least. Two years previously General Smuts had managed, on General Botha's cabled initiative, to smooth over difficulties in connexion with the export of gravel from Holland for the repair of Belgian roads occupied by Germany. England had protested against this traffic, holding that the gravel was utilized "for military purposes."

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The two Union Ministers were in friendly contact with General Fréire d'Andrade and other Portuguese delegates in Paris, on the subject of Mozambique. Their recall to Lisbon, from where other experts were sent to take their places, prevented concrete results being obtained.

Speaking generally, the two South African delegates promoted the Dominion view that Imperial interests were not likely to be served by uncalled-for British intervention in the tangled skein of Continental politics.

Enter, of a sudden, General Hertzog's famous Independence deputation from South Africa! The visit was a brief one. It failed to attract notice amid the spasmodic tension that characterized the hotels and flats where the innumerable delegations were accommodated until the day of peace. The uncertainty regarding Germany's willingness to sign the Treaty maintained anxiety. No one troubled about the South African situation, which was considered a closed chapter. Botha took steps to facilitate the deputation's access to Mr Lloyd George—in those days no easy task. Without this, their journey might have been entirely in vain. The deputation concentrated on the British Prime Minister, since in theory the only body competent to amend the South Africa Act was the Parliament at Westminster. General Hertzog took no trouble to meet Botha.

A bronze plaque, in memory of the South Africans who had fought on the Somme, was placed in the Amiens Cathedral on Botha's initiative. He also commissioned the sculptor Achard to finish the monument to the late President Kruger that now adorns a square at Rustenburg.

A dramatic surprise awaited Botha in London as the day for the signing of the Treaty drew near. General Smuts, quite unexpectedly, told him by telephone that, after due deliberation, he had decided to leave! He did not want to place his signature under the document. The reputation of President Wilson's versatile lieutenant on the League of Nations was such that his refusal would have created a great sensation. Botha left for Paris post-haste on hearing the news. In General Smuts's suite in the Hotel Majestic I

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found a batman industriously packing the General's trunks. Smuts remained inflexible. Botha, however, knew how to appeal to him.

"Surely, you won't desert now!" he said. Together they visited Mr Lloyd George, to whom, as one of the spiritual fathers of the Treaty, the refusal to sign was anything but flattering. General Smuts mentioned a public protest, in case he had to place his name to the document. Mr Lloyd George replied, "Very well, sign first, and then protest afterwards, if protest you must."

And so it happened. The day after Versailles General Smuts's clamorous protest was launched as a vigorous indictment—the first critical review of a disappointing effort to convert chaos into order.

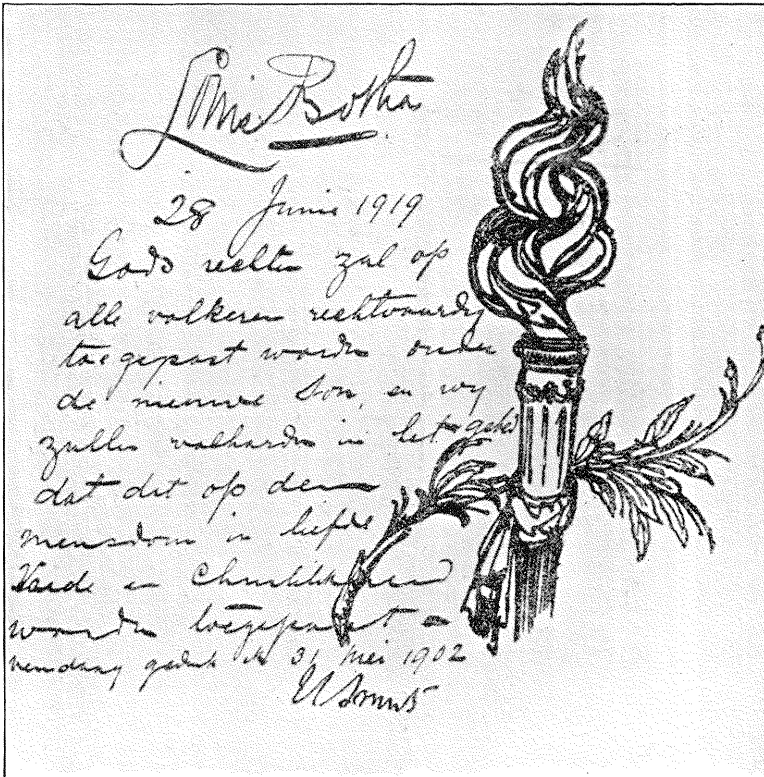
Among all the men who, on June 28, 1919, figured in the Hall of Mirrors, Botha and Smuts were probably the only two, with the exception of Marshal Foch, who had faced the enemy in the field. The others were politicians or diplomats. The Allied pomp and glory attendant upon Germany's military and economic downfall and humiliation had no charm for the two Boers. In the course of their heroic careers each had tasted more intense distress as well as exaltation than any other member of the Conference. They were not a bit proud of its results. Nothing but steady pressure had induced General Smuts to enter an appearance.

As for Botha's inmost thoughts during the solemn formalities of signing, they wandered back to a grievous peace scene full of heartrending touches. . . . Under the influence of his emotion, seizing his agenda paper, he scrawled on it the following words:

"God's justice will be meted out to every nation in His righteousness, under the new Sun. We shall persist in prayer in order that it may be done unto mankind in peace and Christian charity.

"To-day, the 31st of May 1902 comes back to me."

Vereening was haunting Versailles!



Mr Botha

28 Junis 1919

Gods veltin zal op  
alle volkeren rektorandig  
taegespart worden onder  
de nieuwe son, en wy  
zullen verharde in het godel  
dat dit op den  
mensdom in liepe  
Vrede en Christelikeit  
worden toegespart  
vandaag godel 31 mei 1902  
U. Botha

THE LINES WRITTEN BY BOTHA ON HIS AGENDA PAPER AT THE  
SIGNING OF THE PEACE TREATY AT VERSAILLES

See translation in text.



## XL

### BOTHA'S LAST DAYS

FOUR days after the Versailles ceremony Botha sailed from Southampton; he had ardently longed for the day when he should be able to return to his country, where he landed on July 24, 1919. The three weeks did not restore him to health; on the contrary, serious symptoms developed, and the patient had to lay up. Mrs Botha behaved pluckily. To me, as a fellow-passenger, the journey was one of anxiety and forebodings. Botha used to sit in an isolated corner of the lower deck, deep in thought. At times I would do my best to lead his mind back to the great, old days, but he could think of nothing except recent events affecting South Africa. Although he entirely failed to apprehend the probability of an early death, he quite realized that he was not going to make old bones. Satisfied with what he had lately been able to accomplish, he was anticipating his return with cheerfulness, glad at the prospect of delivering at home the message of independence, obtained by his beloved country within the ranks of a commonwealth of free States. This exaltation gave him the physical strength called for by the fatiguing programme that he would have to go through immediately the unpleasant sea voyage ended.

*A Thankful South Africa.*—Both he and General Smuts—who arrived from Europe a week later—were given a series of cordial ovations by the people; at Capetown first, and then at Pretoria, Johannesburg, and, finally, Bloemfontein, where a South Africa Party congress was held. Public receptions and banquets were the order of the day; numerous addresses of welcome were read. On August 8 every town and district of the Transvaal contributed its quota to the

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multitude that crowded the open-air amphitheatre at Union Buildings, Pretoria. There Botha stated: "Thank God, my health is better than it was when I left for the Conference; as long as my country has need of me, I shall continue to serve."

The Peace Treaty was dealt with by him, at Capetown, as follows: "It contains, to my mind, several points that are uncalled-for, superfluous, and impracticable." At Johannesburg, where 700 people attended a banquet on August 13, he voiced his satisfaction at seeing "those who were once chasing each other in South Africa, sitting round one and the same table."

At Bloemfontein he declared himself convinced that "reunion—of the South Africa and Nationalist Parties—was essential, now that the War was a thing of the past. Any racial policy would be fatal. Responsibility rested with the moderates." In all his speeches he emphasized that membership of the League of Nations had made the new Dominion status a tangible fact, establishing inter-imperial as well as international equality of position as between Great Britain and the autonomous Dominions, voluntarily constituting the British Commonwealth of Nations.

*Noisy Cynics.*—An interesting situation arose. His antagonists pertinently refused to believe him and General Smuts. They either would not, or could not, adapt their minds to the outstanding facts of the new situation, preferring to heap noisy ridicule and demonstrative amusement on it. The Nationalists felt in duty bound to save the face of their deputation, which had a little while previously asked Lloyd George for an anachronistic restoration of the South African Republics A.D. 1899; whereas Botha had assisted in making the 1919 Union into an instrument for the generation of future strength. The sincerity, or assumed hesitation, of Nationalist leaders affected their followers, inasmuch as they aspired to the conversion of the Union into a republic, looking for their highest ideals in a separatist, self-contained, national existence. The most recent phase of British-Imperial evolution, consummated in Paris,



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From a photograph taken not long before his death.

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had travelled so far beyond the scope of the ingrained notions of the rank-and-file that it was really necessary to give them time for the ingestion of Botha's message; the process of digestion was bound to take even longer.

Natal, too, was impatiently awaiting an opportunity of rendering homage to the duumvirate, whose extraordinary personality compelled respect, even though it was not given to everyone to grasp the motives guiding their statesmanship. On the way to Maritzburg Botha made a short stay at Rusthof in order to have a look at his estate. He had entered upon the journey with a slight cold. At the small Rusthof station a gang of labourers was at work; when the men heard of his arrival they wished to hail him. It was a bleak, High Veld, winter's day, and the brief meeting in the biting wind affected him. Instead of being able to continue his journey to Natal, he had to return to Pretoria, a sick man. On his arrival he was ordered absolute rest by his doctor.

*A Gentle Death.*—Late in the afternoon of Tuesday, August 26, 1919, Botha took to his bed, without there being any suspicion, on the part of either himself, his family, or his doctor, of worse to come. In the gloaming I paid a short visit; Mrs Botha invited me to come to dinner some evening, "as soon as Louis is well again." The doctor took me home in his car; undisturbed by any anxiety, we discussed the pathological aspect of the Premier's condition, without the slightest presentiment of the blow that was to descend on us so soon.

Twelve hours later, in the early morning of August 27, I was one of the first to whisper a few words of condolence to the widow. General Louis Botha never woke from his slumber; he breathed his last shortly before midnight. In the dead face I recognized the well-known, friendly expression, besides the will-power still delineated in his countenance. His bulky frame had shrunk to almost youthful slenderness.

Before I had left the house of death, General and Mrs Smuts were announced. The General had been informed

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at Heidelberg station, on his return from Durban; he hurried on by special train-engine. The burden, borne by Botha with exemplary patience for so many years, was largely to rest on General Smuts' shoulders; almost he envied his friend's gentle passage to rest eternal.

The news of Botha's sudden demise came with crushing effect on the great mass of the people. During the last few weeks he had figured at many meetings. He had looked vigorous, cheerful, full of energy and the zest of life! The precipitancy of death, as ever, impressed the multitude. To this was added spontaneous appreciation of the fact that it had been Botha's personal magnetism above all things to which South Africa owed its salvation from social and political decay during the Great War.

Was the vacant place going to be filled? Few people were able, at the time, to realize how welcome to Botha himself must have been his passing at a period of nothing but occasion for thankfulness and satisfaction. To him was vouchsafed the great privilege of departing this life at the very height of his ambition as a South African.

Interment took place at Pretoria on August 30, amidst phenomenal manifestations of heartfelt sympathy. The ceremony was purely religious; the evidences of public mourning accompanying it were of eloquent intensity. There were, of course, the usual official condolences. From distant lands, from unexpected nooks, expressions of admiration for Botha's fine and noble qualities were received.

Louis Botha reached the age of fifty-seven. His life was made up of a greater number of noble acts and was richer in soul-stirring experiences than the lives of the majority of his contemporaries would appear to have been.

## XLI

### BOTHA AND GENERAL SMUTS

At the end of the eighteenth century the German people were fortunate in possessing two men who, by their soaring minds and extraordinary gifts, riveted general attention. Thus it was that, among the public, a controversy arose: Which is the greater, Goethe or Schiller? Goethe, hearing of this, exclaimed, "Why all this noise? Rather rejoice that Germany has produced two men equally prominent."

South Africa could point to several remarkable figures during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Without in any way detracting from the appreciation that is the just due of all these, many of their contemporaries rendered high honour to General Botha and General Smuts. As a unique duumvirate they will permanently adorn the political records of the Union. Their talent for harmonious co-operation, year after year and in critical circumstances, evokes our admiration. The German nation has commemorated Goethe and Schiller in a joint monument at Weimar, showing these two hand in hand. The time will come when our country will similarly pay its just tribute to its most attractive couple of national heroes.

General Smuts was eight years younger than Botha. Unlike Botha, who enjoyed an untrammelled youth, Smuts had to fight his way through the circumscribed existence of a law student. From the moment his exceptional intellectual gifts were discovered, he had, willy-nilly, to abandon ancestral farm life. He had to pass many examinations and cram himself with knowledge. In this he succeeded wonderfully well. He was easily Botha's superior in regard to culture.

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In Botha, however, he found matter-of-fact observation, strength of will, a capacity for unlimited sacrifice in his country's cause, and profound altruism. As a statesman, Botha was not quite so careful, although equally far-seeing. What Smuts was able to accomplish, thanks to his trained intellect, Botha achieved by sheer intuition.

*Botha's First Disciple.*—When they began to co-operate in the task of government, many people thought that General Smuts's was essentially the creative mind, whose initiative explained the Botha figure. This impression is a wrong one, except in the region of professional accomplishment, which to Botha was a closed book. As regards all great problems, such as South Africa's Imperial status, the Native question, finance, education, military organization, Botha formed independent opinions. The longer the two men worked together, the closer became their tacit undertaking to keep their parallel orbits available for the building up of a great future for South Africa.

They well understood the art of consultation in cases of disagreement. Many other members of the same party, on the other hand, were fond of publicly advertising differences of opinion between themselves and their 'leader.' Botha and Smuts mutually felt the need of each other in public life. Neither ever looked upon the bond of co-operation as in any way irksome to himself or to the other.

General Smuts was one of the first to be taken into Botha's confidence as regards the policy of peace in South Africa, and who at once fathomed as well as furthered it.

Thus their friendship arose. Not many people are capable of extending, or receiving, fellowship. Only a few, therefore, have experienced the mutually ennobling effects of such friendship. It is not correct—either in the case of Botha and Smuts or generally—to suppose that friends necessarily agree on all points. Does not harmony flow from the solution of discords?

*A Wonderful Combination.*—Socially there never was much intimacy between the two men. Each had his family, his domestic interests, his business to attend to. Botha, by

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way of recreation, liked a quiet game of bridge. To Smuts such pleasures appeared unimagined waste of valuable time! It was his habit to pore over books and documents for hours at a stretch. Botha was fond of a chat. He regarded landscape with the eye of a cattle farmer; Smuts looked at it as a naturalist. Botha's policy of conciliation was a symptom of his philanthropy; Smuts's League of Nations Covenant was the creation of a virtuoso in the sphere of constitutional law. Botha's intellectual biography might be compressed into a single monumental chapter; General Smuts's runs into periods, embracing whole phases of mental endeavour.

Politically the two constantly influenced each other. Smuts's Transvaal Education Act (1907) owed its conception to Botha's broad-minded ideas regarding free primary education and mother-tongue instruction for all.

When the suffragette movement in England had its reactions among South African women, General Smuts wrote to Mr Merriman:

I note what you say about Botha's speeches in regard to suffrage for women. I do not understand Botha seriously to advocate this measure. He has never yet spoken to me about the matter, but I shall warn him to be careful. Afrikanders are conservative, and will resent these revolutionary innovations.

This opinion, be it noted, is twenty years old. The frankness with which General Smuts tells a third person about his intention to chide his friend is characteristic proof that both men were without the conceit that easily causes irritation. No petty jealousy ever vitiated their relations. On Botha's return from South-west Africa in 1915 the Union paid its grateful homage. Early in 1917 General Smuts returned from the East African campaign. Botha wrote from Capetown to a friend: "Oom Jannie is due to-morrow. I am glad Pretoria did him so well. We are going to give him a fine reception here." Simple words, these, showing that not a vestige of jealousy existed.

*Reciprocal Appreciation.*—The same high standard we get in a letter from General Smuts to Mr Merriman, written on



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March 4, 1907, the day the Transvaal Cabinet was sworn: "I might have been Premier, but considered it would be a mistake to take precedence over Botha, who is really one of the first men South Africa has ever produced."

This eulogy was not without its intention. At the Cape the impression prevailed that Botha might be, say, a good soldier, but that he still had to prove his mettle as a statesman.

On his part Botha never found it hard to praise, either privately or publicly, his trusted lieutenant. At the end of 1914, when the rebellion was over, he publicly stated: "Nobody can appreciate sufficiently the great work General Smuts has done. It has been greater than any other man's throughout this unhappy period. He was at his post day and night. His brilliant intellect, his amazing energy, his undaunted courage have been assets of inestimable value to the Union in the hour of trial."

Frequently, when one or other of them was asked for a decision, the answer would be, "Wait until I've seen Smuts," or, "I first want to get Botha's opinion." I rather suspect Botha of occasionally using such a phrase in order to make his decision weightier, once it was notified, even when he had forgotten to make the consultation! Once he said to me, "I am really disappointed myself, but Smuts refuses." It sounded like a business man recognizing that certain transactions depend for their practicability on agreement among partners.

The most notable instance of Botha and Smuts differing occurred at the signature of the Versailles Treaty, when Smuts at first refused to sign, whereas Botha considered the signature desirable, even though he did not admire the document. Smuts, while yielding to Botha, at once published his famous protest after having signed the Treaty. He deserves credit for independent action, when feeling that he was both entitled and obliged to act on his own responsibility.

During the phenomenally difficult second half of 1914 General Smuts, acting as Minister of Defence, invariably

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used his own judgment regarding the manner in which martial law was to be applied. Nothing but his initiative prevailed. Botha therefore was not consulted in connexion with the execution of Japie Fourie—the only rebel who was condemned to death, and suffered the extreme penalty. From Botha's words, just quoted, it appears nevertheless that he did not oppose the step. On the evening of the day when Fourie was made a prisoner, Botha and his wife left Pretoria for their Rusthof home. The stationmaster was the first man to enlighten him as to the capture of Fourie. On Sunday evening—the execution had taken place in the early morning—he returned to Pretoria; he had paid a visit to his son's farm, and efforts to communicate with him by telephone did not succeed.

Botha, while keeping up a fairly regular correspondence with President Steyn, seldom wrote to General Smuts, even during long periods of absence. When Botha began to indite long screeds, one might regard the fact as *prima facie* evidence of there being something wrong . . . on the other side.

Once, after Botha's death, when the 1902 conciliation policy was mentioned, General Smuts said to me: "Botha's line remained absolutely consistent. No one else in South Africa could have stuck it out. You wanted a man for that, very broad-minded, large-hearted. People may say that he went too far in that direction, but it is a policy that helped South Africa over its worst stile. It was quite on the cards that, after the Boer war, the bad, old policy would revive. Botha managed to wean the people of that."

*What Robert Lansing said.*—Mr Lansing, American State Secretary, met Botha in Paris. This is what he says:<sup>1</sup>

A less broad-minded and far-seeing statesman than the Transvaal General would have kept alive a spirit of revenge among his countrymen and counselled passive resistance to the British authorities, thus making amalgamation between the two nationalities a long and painful process. That would have been a very natural course to take. It would have conformed with the common conception

<sup>1</sup> *The Big Four* (Hutchinson).

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of patriotism and the usual sentiment of the vanquished toward the victors, but it did not conform with General Botha's views as to what was wise and practical. He may have regretted, and doubtless did regret, the outcome of the war, . . . but he did not permit vain regrets or false hopes to cloud his vision as to the future or to impair his sound common sense in dealing with new conditions resulting from the British victory. . . . He accepted the fact of defeat with philosophic calmness and exerted all his influence in reconciling his fellow-countrymen to their new allegiance.

*Botha's Life-work.*—In the accomplishment of his life's task, Botha found in Smuts a convinced and enthusiastic helper. Funeral orations, apart from artistic merit, usually have small value as historical material. What Smuts said at Botha's grave may be counted an exception: "He had no equal as a friend. We have worked together intimately for twenty-one years without intermission. We came together with a closeness seldom vouchsafed to friends. This entitles me to call him the greatest, cleanest, sweetest soul of all the land—of all my days. Great in his lifetime, he was happy in his death. To his friend is left the bitter task of burying him, and to defend his works, which were almost too heavy for him to perform."

Six days later, when the Assembly met again, General Smuts said: "To the strength of a man Botha joined the loving-kindness, the tenderness of a woman. He was extremely human as regards sympathy and character. Massive sympathy is what he felt for his fellow-man."

When Botha, in the district of Vryheid, took leave of his staff officers in 1902, he said to them: "The day on which they lower my body into the grave will be the day when rest will be mine." Literally, this prophecy came true.

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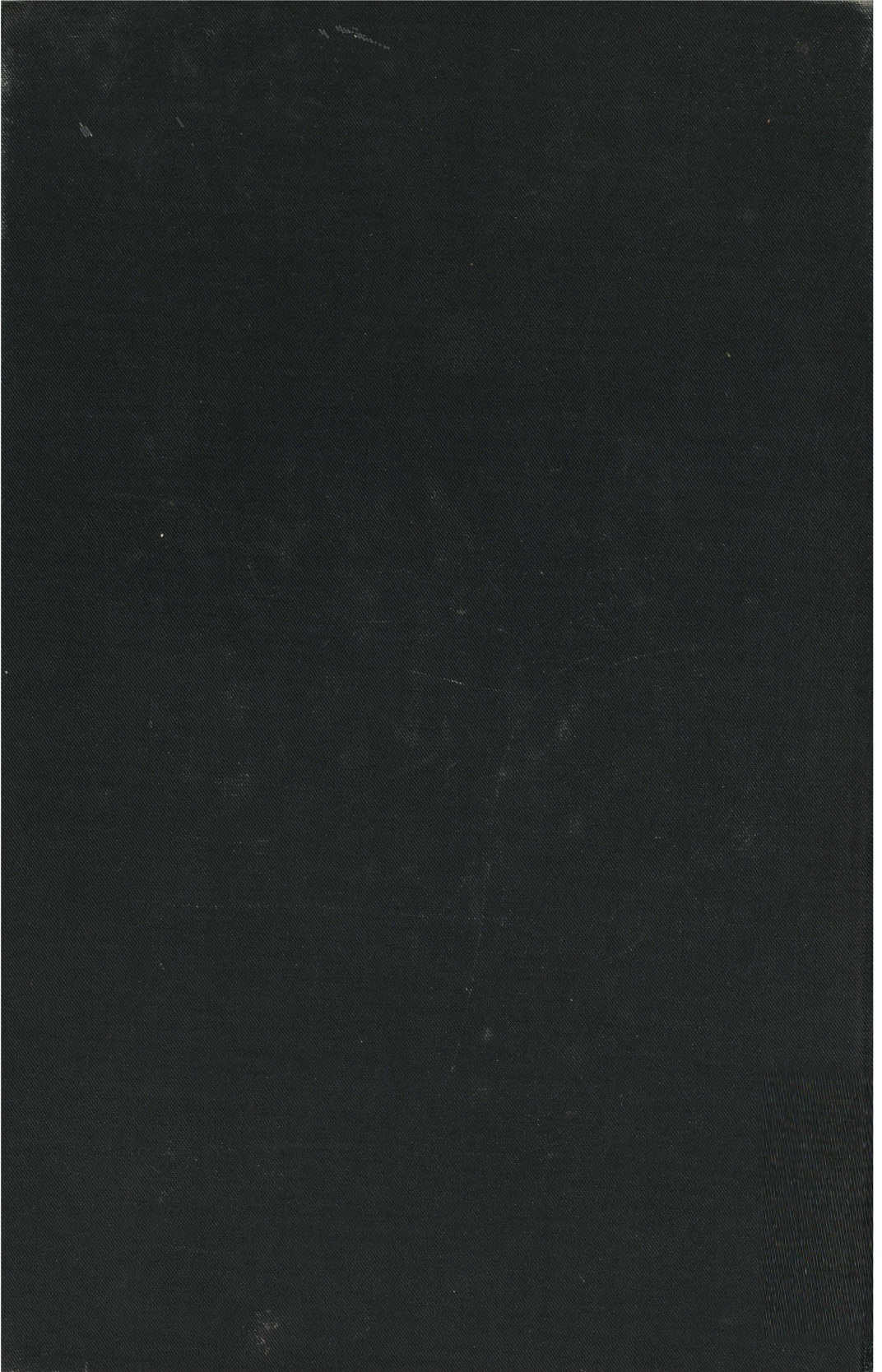
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